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IDEA-1636-63

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18 December 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with Mr. C. L. Johnson, 17 December,
Latest Developments re Carrier Configured U-2s

1. Kelly Johnson called me this morning, 17 December, to report that a problem had developed in the hardware phase of the carrier U-2. This problem centered around the cost, time delay, and range penalty associated with the application of full length leading edge Jet Star slats on the U-bird.

2. It will be recalled that in the low speed wind tunnel tests, Kelly finally opted for the Jet Star slats as opposed to the Kruger leading edge flap of Boeing as the best means of reducing the U-2 contract speed by some seven knots on landing. Further engineering studies have indicated that in order to install the Jet Star slats, room would have to be found in the area now occupied by fuel for the actuating mechanism which would deploy the slats in the landing configuration. Kelly said this would result in what he estimates to be a loss of 400 nautical miles in range capability and, although he did not mention it specifically, I assume there would be a commensurate weight penalty associated with the slat mechanism since it is not clear that its weight would be an equal trade-off for the fuel that would be removed.

3. The other problems which in my opinion render this application infeasible are that Kelly estimates it would cost approximately \$125,000 per aircraft to do the engineering and hardware fabrication on these slats and it would take from three to four additional months beyond delivery date to retro-fit them to the bird. Any one of these three major problems would place the value of the slats in the dubious category, but when all three are combined I believe we should finesse this aspect of the program.

4. Kelly states that the principal result of not having the slats would be that the aircraft might be a little more difficult to spot at a given point on the deck but that with the arresting hook and the additional stress capability available

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in the carrier bird (greater by a factor of three than the non-carrier version) the operation does not become in any respect a marginal one. I asked him if he planned to retain the 45° flap travel feature in the absence of the leading edge flaps and he said he would reserve judgement on this until arresting trials began at Edwards, shortly after the first of the year. I told him I was attempting to obtain from Capt. Collieran in Navy the additional arresting equipment he asked for in [REDACTED] 8829. I also said that we would send him a cable directing that he not proceed further with the Jet Star flap business. I later discussed this decision with [REDACTED] who agreed that we could not stand the loss of range at this time.

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